THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI NITISH KUMAR): (a) and (b) The Government and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have entered into an agreement for a period of five years to strengthen Plan Quarantine measures in India only. The project aims to prevent introduction of exotic pests into the country through development of infrastructure and specialised facilities for quarantine operations and upgrading of technical manpower. The project will be effective till December 2000. The Department of Agriculture & Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture is nodal agency for execution of this project in coordination with the Food & Agriculture Organisation of United Nations (FAO). The contribution of UNDP for expert consultancies, study tours, training of Plant Quarantine Officers and positioning of ultra-modern scientific equipment is to the tune of US $ 3 Million. The Government of India input in kind towards construction of laboratory buildings and glass houses, equipment and manpower at 5 major Plant Quarantine Stations, namely, Amritsar, Calcutta, Chennai. Mumbai and New Delhi amounts to US $ 13.2 Million, approximately Rs. 36.95 crores.

Improvement in SSI Sector

*374. SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of SMALL SCALE INDUSTRIES, AGRO AND RURAL INDUSTRIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that small scale industrial sector presently contributing around 15 million jobs, 40 per cent of industrial production and 35 per cent of exports, is be set with technological obsolescence, inadequate management and marketing, as also deficiency in information dissemination;

(b) keeping in view its importance in national economy whether Government are thinking of adopting measures for having overall improvement in SSI sector; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SMALL SCALE INDUSTRIES, AGRO AND RURAL INDUSTRIES,

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL AND TRAINING, DEPARTMENT OF PENSIONS AND PENSIONERS WELFARE OF THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF ATOMIC ENERGY AND SPACE (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) In spite of the good performance of the small scale industries sector, during the last few years, both in terms of growth and export performance, the problems of threatened technological obsolescence, managerial and marketing deficiencies and inadequacy of access to information do exist.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) A comprehensive strategy of training, product development, technology upgradation and marketing assistance for the small scale industries sector has been adopted. In addition, a Credit Guarantee Scheme is to be launched shortly.

Dilemma over ST payment of Aviation Turbine Fuel

†*375. SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news item which appeared in the Hindustan Times dated 6th December, 1999 captioned "Oil majors in a dilemma over ST payment on aviation turbine fuel";

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto;

(c) the details of agreement with various airlines on this issue; and

(d) the corrective measure proposed in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) Air Services Agreements signed by the Government with other countries (93 in all) have an article which provides, on reciprocal basis, either.